

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9157

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 6276

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, BG

SUBJ: A.K.M. AHSAN APPONTED PRICIPAL SECRETARY TO THE
PRESIDENT

1. A.K.M. AHSAN, MEMBER OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND HEAD OF THE NOW DEFUNCT PROJECTS IMPLEMENTATION BUREAU, WAS APPOINTED ON DECEMBER 18 AS PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT. HE REPLACES MAHBUB ALAM CHASHI WHO NOW BECOMES SPECIAL SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT FOR AGRICULTURE BUT RETAINS HIS "RANK AND STATUS OF PRINCIPAL SECRETARY." IN ADDITION TO BECOMING PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, AHSAN ASSUMES THE DUTIES OF SECRETARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT DIVISION. (THE INCUMBENT SECRETARY MAHBUBUR RAHMAN "HAS BEEN PERMITTED TO RETIRE VOLUNTARILY FROM GOVERNMENT SERVICE" ACCORDING TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT.)

2. COMMENT. THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS THAT CHASHI MIGHT NOT REMAIN AS PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, BECAUSE OF BOTH HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH FORMER PRESIDENT MUSHTAQUE AHMED AND THE BELIEF AMONG BUREAUCRATS THAT CHASHI, WHO COMES FROM PAKISTAN FOREIGN SERVICE, WAS INSUFFICIENTLY VERSED IN CIVIL ADMINISTRATION. WHILE CHASHI HAS BEEN DEMOTED, HIS NEW JOB WILL
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ENABLE HIM TO CONTINUE TO INFLUENCE AGRICULTURAL POLICIES,

HIS PRINCIPAL INTEREST FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. A.K.M. AHSAN WAS A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE CIVIL SERVICE OF PAKISTAN AND SHOULD BRING TO THE JOB A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORKINGS OF THE NEW BUREAUCRACY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION THAN DID CHASHI. A REPATRIATE IN 1973, AHSAN HAS HAD LITTLE OPPORTUNITY UNTIL NOW, HOWEVER, TO DEMONSTRATE HIS EXECUTIVE ABILITY; HE JOINED THE PLANNING COMMISSION AT THE TIME OF ITS DECLINE AND THE PROJECTS IMPLEMENTATION BUREAU CREATED BY MUJIB NEVER GOT OFF THE GROUND. IN CONTRAST, HIS NEW POSITION GIVES HIM FORMIDABLE POWERS; AS PRINCIPAL SECRETARY HE WILL GUIDE THE FLOW OF ALL BUSINESS TO BANGOBHABAN AND AS SECRETARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT DIVISION HE CAN CONTROL THE DUREAUCRACY. GIVEN THE CHARACTER AND ATTITUDES OF PRESIDENT SAYEM, AHSAN SHOULD HAVE LITTLE DIFFICULTY EXERCISING HIS POWERS ON SAYEM'S BEHALF IF HE IS WILLING AND ABLE TO TAKE INITIATIVE. THE KEY TO HIS EFFECTIVENESS WILL, THEREFORE, HINGE ON (A) HIS OWN ENERGY AND (B) HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE THREE DEPUTY CHIEFMARTIAL LAW ADMINSTRATORS, PARTICULARLY GENERAL ZIA.

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